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National Parties in the European Parliament

An Influence in the Committee System?

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ABSTRACT

The European Parliament's increased legislative role in recent years means that its actions are now more likely to have an impact on national parties' policy choices and, indirectly, on their electoral fortunes. This article examines the extent to which national party delegations deal with this by ensuring representativeness among their committee contingents. Using a technique borrowed from Cox and McCubbins (1993), the article compares the voting behaviour of committee contingents with their national party delegations on the basis of roll-call votes. The analysis shows that, for the most part, national parties ensure higher levels of representativeness on committees that have legislative power. The results support the assertion that, as the European Parliament's actions matter more, national parties have become more concerned with their MEPs' activities.

KEY WORDS

- committees
- European Parliament
- legislatures
- national party delegations
- roll-call votes

The European Parliament's (EP) increased legislative role in recent years means that its actions are now more likely to have an impact on national parties' policy choices. Thus it has become increasingly important for national party delegations to act in a consistent manner when making decisions across a range of European Union (EU) policies. This paper looks at a key aspect of ensuring this consistency, the representativeness of national party delegations' committee contingents. The paper tests a model derived from party-centred approaches to legislative organization (Kiewiet and McCubbins, 1991; Cox and McCubbins, 1993) in order to assess the extent to which national party delegations maintain the full range of views among their committee contingents, particularly where those committees have the opportunity to influence legislation or budgetary matters in the EU.

Existing research on political parties and committees in the EP suggests that party group leaderships use their power over committee assignments to reward loyal members and to punish those who frequently rebel (McElroy, 2001). Such a strategy allows parties to increase cohesion and thereby their control over the legislature itself. Studies of voting behaviour among Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) are consistent with this and show party group cohesion to be high, particularly among the three groups linked to transnational party organizations: the European People's Party-European Democrats (EPP-ED), the Party of European Socialists (PES) and the European Liberal Democrat and Reform group (ELDR) (Hix et al., forthcoming).

However, a further dimension to party control over committees concerns the representativeness of committee contingents. Distributive theories of legislative organization (e.g. Weingast and Marshall, 1988) suggest that committee membership is self-selected, resulting in committees that are dominated by 'high demanders' aiming to improve their re-election prospects by generating constituency-specific benefits; political parties are of little concern in this approach. In contrast, others suggest that parties are key actors in solving the problem of electoral inefficiency (Cox and McCubbins, 1993) and in improving legislators' re-election chances in the long run (Aldrich, 1995). If parties are to minimize agency losses and ensure consistency in decision-making across different policy areas, they need to select committee contingents that represent the full range of views within their party (Kiewiet and McCubbins, 1991; Cox and McCubbins, 1993). In the context of the EP, although some research has analysed the representativeness of committees in terms of MEPs' occupational experience and links to interest groups (Bowler and Farrell, 1995), we still know little about the extent to which committees are representative of the range of preferences within each party. Given the lack of public engagement with transnational parties, this concern with

representativeness is most likely to be felt by national parties, which, as the EP's influence has risen, are increasingly likely to care about how their MEPs vote (Carrubba and Gabel, 1998; Scully, 2000). This paper uses roll-call voting data to measure differences in voting behaviour between EP committee members and their respective national party delegations. If there are similarities in voting, we have evidence to support Cox and McCubbins' party-centred theory of legislative organization in which parties employ committees to further their collective interests. Alternatively, the presence of differences in voting behaviour would favour the distributive approach, suggesting that committees are primarily tools for the provision of constituency-specific legislation. This theoretical framework is set out in more detail in the next section of the paper. A second section establishes a series of hypotheses, which are then tested on roll-call data from the EP. Finally, some conclusions are drawn.

Theoretical framework: Committees as instruments of political parties

The question of whether committee members vote in similar ways to the other members of their party is worth investigating because it tells us about the extent to which parties are concerned with their collective reputation and with ensuring that committees act as agents of the full range of interests within the party. However, approaches to understanding parties and committees often assert that their strength is inversely related (e.g. Shaw, 1979) or that parties are of little consequence for the organization of committee systems. For instance, according to distributive theories of legislative organization (e.g. Shepsle and Weingast, 1987; Weingast and Marshall, 1988), the purpose of committees is to facilitate the distribution of constituency-specific benefits that increase each legislator's chance of being re-elected. Consequently, legislators will aim to obtain assignments to those committees that reflect the interests of their constituents. Committees may be unrepresentative in terms of the legislature as a whole, because they are likely to be composed of members whose demands in the relevant policy area are higher than those of the median legislator.

Cox, Kiewiet and McCubbins, among others, challenge this orthodoxy by arguing that committees are used by the majority party to coordinate legislators' actions. Under this approach, parties and committees can be strong institutions simultaneously, with the latter acting as an extension of the former (Cox and McCubbins, 1993). Parties will delegate decision-making power to committee members because this promotes policy specialization and an efficient division of labour. In order to reduce agency losses, parties will

ensure that committee contingents are representative of the range of preferences within the party group. This allows non-committee members to trust the decisions of party colleagues and helps to ensure consistency in party policy across different issues, thereby increasing the informational value behind the party label (Kiewiet and McCubbins, 1991: 40). Building on this approach, Cox and McCubbins' partisan selection model suggests that the representativeness of committee contingents will vary in line with the uniformity of the externalities resulting from a particular committee's jurisdiction. On committees whose policy decisions have the potential to affect most electoral districts to a similar degree, parties will ensure that committee contingents are representative of the party's views. This will allow for intra-party negotiations such that parties can 'unite . . . behind broad legislation with a national impact, thereby affecting the party's collective reputation with the electorate' (Cox and McCubbins, 1993: 190). Parties are less likely to be concerned with ensuring representativeness among committees whose jurisdictions generate 'targeted externalities', i.e. policies that affect only certain groups of voters. These motivations reflect a concern with the party's reputation among the electorate. Where many voters are likely to feel the effects of a policy, it is important to ensure that all factions within the party are involved in policy-making, such that intra-party disputes can be solved and the full range of electoral interests is taken into account (Cox and McCubbins, 1993: 190–1).

A third approach to legislative organization suggests that the purpose of committees is to furnish the legislature with information about the likely consequences of different policy options (Krehbiel, 1991). Committees allow legislators to develop specialist knowledge that can be used in the interests of the whole legislature to reduce the uncertainty surrounding the consequences of policies. According to this view, committees will attract members representing the whole range of views present in the chamber (Krehbiel, 1991: 6) such that committee decisions can be trusted by all members of the legislature. Although Krehbiel plays down the role of parties, his approach is not necessarily inconsistent with that of Cox and McCubbins. As Rohde (1994) argues, information may be crucially important in committee composition, but this does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that parties do not matter. Indeed national party delegations in the EP can be crucial in providing information to their parties back home (Scully, 2000). If all views within a party are represented, then members can trust the decisions of committees and national parties can avoid outcomes that unfavourably constrain their policy options or create politically embarrassing circumstances in the domestic polity.

The problem with applying these approaches in the case of the EP is that the electoral connection on which these theories rest is weak in the European

Union. Carrubba (2001) finds some evidence of an electoral connection in terms of political parties' response to changing preferences on EU issues among electorates. However, this connection operates largely through national political parties. Transnational parties, on the other hand, hardly feature in the minds of voters at EP elections (e.g. Irwin, 1995; Smith, 1999), hence party leaders need have little concern with the collective reputation of their party groups among the electorate. Nevertheless, there are reasons to suppose that *national* party delegations aim to take into account the full range of views in party decision-making and to maintain consistency in party policy. Such a strategy benefits MEPs in terms of both re-election and policy goals.

First, national parties are vulnerable to electoral damage at home if their EP members are associated with unpopular policies emerging from the European Union. Witness, for instance, the German government's heavy lobbying of its MEPs on the 'Takeover Directive' in 2001 (Judge and Earnshaw, 2003: 146). Even if EP decisions do not immediately affect public opinion, the actions of MEPs may constrain the policy choices of national parties, thereby frustrating their policy-seeking goals and possibly causing electoral problems in the longer term. If MEPs are to prevent damage to their national parties, and thereby increase their chances of re-selection and possible re-election, they need to make sure that the full range of views within their national party is taken into account in its decision-making. This will be particularly important for committees in areas of policy where the EP can make a difference, such as the Budgets committee and those that deal with legislation under the co-decision and assent procedures.

Second, if MEPs are to pursue their policy goals effectively, they need to build sufficient support to achieve the absolute majorities required by parts of the budgetary and co-decision procedures. Taking into account the full range of views within a party increases the chances of the group then acting together. Furthermore, the ability to make effective use of these legislative procedures contributes to the reputation of the EP as a whole, thus increasing the possibility of further powers being transferred to the EP in the future and allowing MEPs to pursue their policy goals across a wider range of policy areas (Kreppel, 2002).

MEPs themselves suggest that cue-taking on the basis of trust in other members of their national party delegation is a significant factor in their decision-making. In the words of an Irish member:

> In all honesty, not a lot of the votes that I participate in, and any MEP would have to be honest and say, I haven't a clue what I'm voting for. The reason you trust is because if you're in a group . . . if you're in with similar [*sic*] minded people, you assume that on issues, even though you're not involved in them, that you're singing from the same hymn sheet, so it's ok to follow them.[1]

A British MEP made a similar point:

> You're just left to trust your colleagues and if you find one or two of them are completely getting it wrong and you've been led to vote in an embarrassing way that you didn't mean or didn't want, then you say 'hey you're not on the ball'.[2]

If these systems of trust work in the EP, then we would expect to see a high degree of representativeness among members of the most legislatively active committees. To the extent that MEPs' actions constrain national parties' policy choices and have potential electoral effects, we would expect to see some evidence of variations in representativeness depending on the uniformity of externalities associated with committee jurisdictions. If, on the other hand, committees are primarily used to satisfy constituency-specific interests, we would expect to see differences in voting between committee contingents and their party groups across the board. The following section sets out a technique for testing these predictions using roll-call votes.

Measuring committee representativeness: Mean absolute difference scores

The mean absolute difference score

One of the ways in which the representativeness of committee contingents can be analysed is by examining the voting behaviour of committee members in votes on their own committee's reports or resolutions. Cox and McCubbins propose a method of assessing this based on the Rice index of voting likeness (Rice, 1928). They explain the technique using the example of the Democratic contingent on the Agriculture committee in the US House of Representatives:

> First, for each of the twenty-three roll-calls [on bills reported out by the Agriculture committee in the 98th Congress] we compute the difference between the proportion of the contingent voting yes and the proportion of the rest of the party voting yes. Second we take the absolute value of each of these twenty-three differences and average them. This approach yields a straightforward statistic, the mean absolute difference (MAD) . . . If MAD is zero, then the contingent and the rest of the party never differed, and there is no evidence of unrepresentativeness; as MAD grows larger, the contingent appears more and more distinctive in its behavior vis-à-vis the rest of the party. (Cox and McCubbins, 1993: 220)

In formal terms the mean absolute difference for a particular party on a given committee is calculated thus:

$$MAD = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n} |c_i - p_i|}{n}$$

where c_i is the percentage of the party's contingent on a given committee voting 'yes' on the ith vote, p_i is the percentage of the rest of the party voting 'yes' on the ith vote and n is the number of votes for that committee/party combination.

Cox and McCubbins' application of this technique to roll-call votes (RCVs) held in the US Congress produces MAD scores ranging from as low as 2.3 for the Veterans' Affairs committee, to 17.9 for Armed Services (1993: 223). In the case of Veterans' Affairs for instance, this score means that, on average, there was a 2.3% difference in the proportion of committee Democrats voting 'yes' when compared with non-committee Democrats on issues reported out by the Veterans' Affairs committee. Although many committees in Cox and McCubbins' analysis show very similar levels of intra-party differences, these two examples are largely consistent with the authors' predictions, in that Veterans' Affairs affects citizens across all districts of the USA whereas the externalities resulting from the Armed Services committee are much more mixed. Nevertheless, Cox and McCubbins conclude that the measure is problematic because it is difficult to assess whether it measures unrepresentativeness or logrolling among committee members (1993: 223). I will return to this issue later.

MAD has also been used to study voting behaviour in the Swiss National Council in the period 1992–4 (Lanfranchi and Lüthi, 1999). Switzerland provides an interesting case study because its permanent standing committees were introduced only in 1992. MAD scores may therefore help to show whether the new committees, and the potential for specialization within them, have had any effect on the voting behaviour of parliamentarians. Lanfranchi and Lüthi (1999: 113–16) calculate MAD scores for three different parties and a number of committees in the National Council for the first two years of the standing committees' existence. Their results are very similar to those seen in the US Congress, with MAD scores ranging from 1.6 for the Christian Democratic Foreign Affairs contingent, to 15.9 for the same party's members on the Social Security committee. Therefore, despite the fact that Swiss parliamentary standing committees are relatively young institutions, there are differences in the voting behaviour of their members compared with the rest of their party group. Furthermore, Lanfranchi and Lüthi's analysis uncovered a number of cases of extreme differences between committee contingents and parties, where compromises reached in committee were defended by committee members despite the ensuing conflict with the party group's line (1999: 116).

MAD scores in the European Parliament

In the case of the European Parliament, roll-call votes are not entirely unproblematic as a measure of MEP voting behaviour from which generalizations can be made. RCVs make up only around one-third of all votes taken in the EP (Hix, 2001: 667). According to Rule 134(1) of the EP's Rules of Procedure (2004), RCVs may be requested by a political group or at least 32 members and are usually held in order to publicize the position of a particular party group or to allow a group's leadership to monitor the votes of its members (Corbett et al., 2003: 147; Raunio, 1997: 88; Kreppel, 2002: 128–9). Carrubba and Gabel (1999) point out that both of these reasons may mean that RCVs are unrepresentative of voting as a whole in the European Parliament. Concentrating on the second of the two motivations for calling a roll-call vote, they argue that one is unlikely to see instances of low cohesion because party group leaders can use RCVs to discipline members who might otherwise vote against the group line. According to Carrubba and Gabel's model, such leaders will request a roll-call vote only if they can be sure they will win. As the authors explain, 'if either the leader expects to win without having to impose sanctions or the leader expects to lose even with imposing sanctions, she will not request a RCV' (Carrubba and Gabel, 1999: 16). In a preliminary test of their model, using RCVs from the fourth EP term (1994–9), they find that, in the vast majority of cases, the party group calling for the RCV did indeed win the vote. This suggests that RCVs may overstate the level of cohesion among the EP's party groups.

In a further paper, Carrubba et al. (2003) demonstrate that RCVs are highly unrepresentative of the universe of votes in the EP. Specifically, roll-calls underrepresent legislative votes and certain policy areas such as the environment and women's rights. With these caveats borne in mind, roll-call votes nevertheless remain a useful source of information. They are still 'the most reliable indicator of party group cohesion' (Raunio, 1997: 117) and, furthermore, they do at least cover a fairly broad range of policy areas and legislative procedures. Nevertheless, any inferences drawn from analysis of RCVs in the EP must be qualified in terms of the unrepresentative nature of votes taken by roll-call.

Notwithstanding these problems, from the theoretical approaches set out earlier we can establish some specific expectations about the representativeness of committee contingents. Cox and McCubbins' partisan selection model would lead us to expect higher levels of representativeness on committees with uniform externalities, and lower levels on those with targeted externalities. Our expectations concerning committees with mixed externalities will vary in terms of the balance between targeted and uniform externalities in

their jurisdictions. This approach requires some modification in this context because the EP lacks legislative powers in some areas of EU legislation. Most of the EP's committees now have responsibility for at least some policy areas that are subject to the co-decision procedure. Furthermore, the Budgets and Budgetary Control committees exercise a key role through the EU's budgetary and discharge procedures. However, owing to their jurisdictions, the Constitutional Affairs and Fisheries committees have almost no chance of preparing reports under co-decision and hence are unlikely to have a substantial effect on national politics. In addition, the Petitions committee is not involved in legislative procedures. In what follows, the Constitutional Affairs, Fisheries and Petitions committees have therefore been distinguished from all others, because they did not produce reports subject to the co-decision or annual budgetary procedures in the period covered by the data.[3] Using these modifications to Cox and McCubbins' model, we can hypothesize as follows:

> **H1**: Committees that are legislatively active and that have uniform externalities will be more representative than others. These committees include Budgets, Budgetary Control, Citizens' Freedoms, Economic and Monetary Affairs, Employment and Social Affairs, Environment, Foreign Affairs, Legal Affairs and Women's Rights.

Classifying committees with targeted externalities is a little more difficult. Given that we are concerned with the effects of the EP's actions at the national political level, we need to focus on the extent to which a committee's externalities are targeted *within* each member state. Agriculture, for example, might affect only particular regions within some member states, but it may be an issue of national importance for other states, such as France; parties from the latter countries will be concerned to ensure representativeness among the relevant committee contingent. Within these restrictions, it still seems reasonable to expect that the Agriculture and Fisheries committees are the most likely to generate targeted externalities, although, to the extent that these vary across member states, the differences in representativeness between committees with uniform and targeted externalities may be reduced.

> **H2**: Committees with targeted externalities will be less representative than others. These committees include Agriculture and Fisheries.

Some committees in the EP generate mixed externalities. The Regional Policy, Transport and Tourism committee (RETT) and the Industry, External Trade, Research and Energy (ITRE) committee are cases in point. RETT deals, on the one hand, with EU-wide policies, such as Trans-European Networks, compensation for air passengers and road safety, and, on the other, with

regionally specific issues including the structural funds and the regulation of maritime transport. For the period in question (1999–2000), however, only a small proportion of RETT's reports dealt with regional policy, because by 1999 decisions regarding the allocation of European Regional Development Fund spending for the period up to 2006 had already been made (Allen, 2000; Laffan and Shackleton, 2000). Much of the committee's work has therefore involved transport policy with largely uniform externalities, except for maritime issues.

H3: The Regional Policy, Transport and Tourism committee will demonstrate a higher level of representativeness than will committees with targeted externalities.

Much of the legislation dealt with by ITRE is specific to particular industries and therefore to certain areas within member states. Some reports from this committee concentrate on policies with more uniform effects, such as payment periods in commercial transactions or trans-European telecommunications networks. The range of externalities is therefore mixed but is tilted towards targeted effects.

H4: The Industry, External Trade, Research and Energy committee will demonstrate a lower level of representativeness than will legislatively active committees with uniform externalities.

Our expectations, however, should be tempered by the restrictions placed on the committee assignment process by the EP's (2004) Rules of Procedure, which state that '[t]he composition of the committees shall, as far as possible, reflect the composition of Parliament' (Rule 152(1)). As McElroy (2001) shows, this is largely followed in practice. Within each party group, committee seats are distributed among national delegations, again largely in proportion to their size. Hence national parties may be restricted in their ability to ensure representativeness within committee contingents, simply by the number of MEPs they are able to place on each committee. Thus, even if party leaders are concerned with the effects of committee decisions on their policy choices and electoral fortunes, they may not always be able to ensure representativeness among the relevant groups of committee members.

An alternative hypothesis can be derived from the distributive approach, which suggests that legislators will select committees that allow them to provide benefits of value specifically to their constituency. As a result, committees will not be representative of the entire legislature but will be 'composed of "preference outliers" or those who value the position most highly' (Weingast and Marshall, 1988: 148–9). Weingast and Marshall find evidence to support their hypothesis among committees covering a diverse range of policy areas with varying types of externality. If this is the case in

the EP, then we should expect to see unrepresentativeness among national party committee contingents across the board. Note that this approach predicts the same outcome as Cox and McCubbins do for committees with targeted externalities. However, our expectations may again be tempered by the varying legislative powers of EP committees. If the predictions of self-selection in committee membership and high demanders on committees were to hold up, we would surely expect them to do so in the case of legislative committees, where the probabilities of influencing the content of legislation are highest.

> **H5**: National party contingents on legislatively active committees, including Budgets, Budgetary Control, Citizens' Freedoms, Economic and Monetary Affairs, Employment and Social Affairs, Environment, Foreign Affairs, Industry, Legal Affairs and Women's Rights, will be unrepresentative of their delegation as a whole.

Data and results

In order to test these predictions, data were drawn from all RCVs held in the first year of the 1999–2004 term.[4] The Culture, Development and Petitions committees were excluded from the analysis because no roll-call votes were taken on reports derived from these committees in the period covered by the data. The number of votes for each committee varies considerably, from 5 votes for the Foreign Affairs committee up to nearly 200 votes on reports generated by the Environment committee (Table 1). The sample includes votes on own-initiative and other non-legislative reports as well as those taken under the consultation and co-decision procedures, including amendments and final votes.

The sample combines committees frequently involved in the legislative process (e.g. Environment, RETT) with those that have rarely or never had the chance to exercise legislative influence (e.g. Constitutional Affairs, Fisheries). Furthermore, the 14 committees cover all three types of externality: uniform (e.g. Budgets, Legal Affairs, and Economic and Monetary Affairs), mixed (RETT, ITRE) and targeted (Agriculture, Fisheries). In each case, MAD scores were calculated for all national party delegations with a committee contingent larger than 1. Cases where less than half a group's relevant committee contingent were in attendance have been excluded from the analysis. The data set comprises 12 national party delegations covering 5 member states. Table 1 sets out these delegations as well as the committees used in the analysis, together with the total number of RCVs for each. Table 2 reports MAD scores for each committee by party and for each committee overall.

Table 1 Committees and national party delegations included in the analysis

Committees	*n*	*National party delegations*[a]	*n*
Agriculture	18	Germany	
Budgetary Control	51	CDU/CSU	593
Budgets	39	SPD	534
Citizens' Freedoms and Rights	68	France	
Constitutional Affairs	147	Parti Socialiste	213
Economic and Monetary Affairs	130	RPFIE	6
Employment and Social Affairs	22	UDF	5
Environment	194	Italy	
Fisheries	25	Democratici di Sinistra	55
Foreign Affairs	5	Forza Italia	51
Industry, External Trade, Research and Energy	60	Spain	
Legal Affairs	13	Partido Popular	526
Regional Policy, Transport and Tourism	21	PSOE	315
Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities	6	UK	
		Conservatives	534
		Labour	452
		Liberal Democrats	49

Notes: *n* = number of roll-call votes.
[a] CDU/CSU = Christlich Demokratische Union/Christlich Soziale Union Deutschlands; PSOE = Partido Socialista Obrero Español; RPFIE = Rassemblement pour la France et l'Indépendence de l'Europe; SPD = Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands; UDF = Union pour la Démocratie Française.

As can be seen from Table 2, the most striking aspect of these scores is that they are comparatively low. Most of the party scores fall within a range of 0–5.5; the extreme values are 10 for the British Conservatives on Foreign Affairs and 0, which occurs for 14 of the party/committee combinations. This suggests that, at least in the case of RCVs, EP committee contingents are for the most part highly representative of their respective national party delegations.[5] The differences in the overall committee MAD scores are not huge but are largely supportive of hypotheses 1–4, reflecting Cox and McCubbins' party-centred approach rather than the distributive explanation of party–committee relations (H5). Thus, the lower scores for Budgets (2.5), Budgetary Control (1.3), Employment (1.3), Foreign Affairs (2.4), Legal Affairs (0.6), RETT (1.6) and Women's Rights (0.5) contrast with the higher MAD values for Agriculture (4.0) and Constitutional Affairs (3.4). The Industry committee has a higher score (2.7) than most of the legislatively active committees with uniform externalities.

Table 2 Mean absolute difference (MAD) scores

Committee/party[a]	*MAD*	*Roll-calls (n)*	*Committee MAD*[b]
Agriculture			4.0
CDU/CSU	5.1	18	
Conservative	8.7	16	
Parti Socialiste	0.0	16	
PSOE	0.0	9	
SPD	4.2	15	
Budgetary Control			1.3
CDU/CSU	1.3	51	
Budgets			2.5
CDU/CSU	0.9	39	
Conservative	3.7	36	
Labour	5.0	39	
Partido Popular	0.7	34	
RPFIE	8.3	6	
SPD	0.9	39	
Citizens' Freedoms and Rights, Justice and Home Affairs			3.7
CDU/CSU	4.8	42	
Conservative	4.6	4	
Democratici di Sinistra	5.5	48	
Labour	1.7	42	
Liberal Democrats	0.6	49	
SPD	5.7	68	
Constitutional Affairs			3.4
Conservative	5.5	94	
Partido Popular	2.1	58	
PSOE	2.6	147	
Economic and Monetary Affairs			3.4
CDU/CSU	6.7	130	
Conservative	2.2	87	
Labour	3.6	91	
Partido Popular	2.3	124	
PSOE	1.4	88	
SPD	3.3	130	
Employment and Social Affairs			1.3
CDU/CSU	1.4	22	
Conservative	2.5	21	
Forza Italia	2.2	20	
Labour	1.3	10	
Partido Popular	0.6	18	
Parti Socialiste	0.0	19	
SPD	0.4	9	
Environment			5.0
CDU/CSU	7.8	194	
Conservative	3.8	188	
Labour	3.0	188	
Partido Popular	6.1	186	
Parti Socialiste	3.9	113	
SPD	4.9	194	

Table 2 Continued

Committee/party[a]	*MAD*	*Roll-calls (n)*	*Committee MAD*[b]
Fisheries			1.2
Partido Popular	1.2	25	
Foreign Affairs			2.4
CDU/CSU	2.0	5	
Conservative	10.0	5	
PP	0.0	4	
SPD	0.0	5	
UDF	0.0	5	
Industry, External Trade, Research and Energy			2.7
CDU/CSU	0.8	56	
Conservative	0.4	60	
Forza Italia	0.9	9	
Labour	3.7	59	
Partido Popular	1.9	55	
Parti Socialiste	5.1	52	
PSOE	2.3	50	
SPD	4.7	60	
Legal Affairs			0.6
CDU/CSU	0.2	9	
Conservative	4.4	6	
Forza Italia	0.0	8	
Labour	0.0	6	
Partido Popular	0.0	3	
SPD	0.0	13	
Regional Policy, Transport and Tourism			1.6
CDU/CSU	0.4	21	
Conservative	1.3	17	
Democratici di Sinistra	0.0	5	
Forza Italia	3.0	14	
Labour	0.7	17	
Partido Popular	4.0	19	
Parti Socialiste	0.0	12	
PSOE	2.8	18	
SPD	0.6	16	
Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities			0.5
CDU/CSU	0.8	6	
Democratici di Sinistra	0.0	2	
PSOE	0.0	2	

Notes: The range of delegations varies for each committee because absolute difference scores were not calculated where a delegation contained fewer than 2 members. The number of votes varies between delegations under each committee because absolute difference scores were not calculated where less than half a delegation's committee contingent was in attendance.

[a] For abbreviations see Table 1.

[b] The MAD score for all votes taken on each committee's reports.

Results for the Fisheries and Environment committees are inconsistent with hypotheses 1 and 2. The low score for the Fisheries committee may reflect the importance of the fishing industry for Spain as a whole. However, without data from other member states it is difficult to test this hypothesis. By contrast, the Environment committee has some of the highest MAD scores for individual parties and the highest score overall at the committee level. The explanation lies partly in the targeted externalities resulting from some of the legislation reported out by the committee. Many of the higher scores are associated with votes on the first reading of the EU's Tobacco Directive.[6] At the time, MEPs, particularly those with tobacco manufacturers in their constituencies, were subject to fairly intensive lobbying from tobacco companies (Judge and Earnshaw, 2003: 276). Indeed, contributions to the plenary debate following the votes suggest that some MEPs were concerned about the possible loss of jobs in cigarette manufacturing owing to the proposed restrictions on exports of stronger cigarettes currently produced in the EU (*EP Debates*, 14 June 2000). This issue appears to be one of targeted externalities, where the effects of some elements of the legislation would be felt by specific regions within member states. Such a view is confirmed by the fact that voting differences appear to be lower on issues that are more obviously uniform in their externalities, such as air quality or water policy.

Multivariate analysis

We can look more closely at the variation in absolute difference scores using a regression analysis. Rather than using the mean figures, the variable of interest here is the absolute difference score calculated for each national party delegation on each vote. The distribution of this variable is far from normal. Around 75% of cases score 0, and most of the others fall within a range of 1–20.[7] The data are in effect censored below 1 owing to the combination of the small size of the committee contingents, most of which are made up of 2–4 MEPs, and the use of percentages to measure aggregate voting behaviour. Larger committee contingents would allow for more sensitivity in the measure of voting behaviour, thus increasing the likelihood of scores between 0 and 1. Given the censored nature of the data, the appropriate statistical tool is Tobit regression, which splits the data into censored and uncensored values and uses maximum likelihood to estimate the coefficients. For uncensored cases, Tobit maximizes the likelihood of these observations, whereas for censored values it attempts to maximize the probability that the dependent variable is at or below the censored value (Long, 1997: 204–5). Tobit coefficients therefore refer to the effect of the independent variables on a latent

dependent variable that is observed only for values above the censored level and, in this case, is censored for values less than or equal to 1.

The equation includes dummy variables for each of the committees in Table 1 except Constitutional Affairs. The latter is chosen as a base category owing to its non-legislative status; hence, according to hypotheses 1–4, national party delegations will be less concerned with ensuring representativeness on this committee compared with those with a legislative role to play. The coefficient for each of these dummies can be interpreted as the effect on the absolute difference score of a vote being based on reports from that committee compared with the Constitutional Affairs committee. Hypotheses 1–3 lead us to expect negative coefficients for the committee dummies and, for Agriculture and Fisheries, coefficients that are higher than others or no different from the base category, because both the Agriculture and Fisheries committees have targeted externalities and Fisheries has no legislative role. Hypothesis 4 predicts that the result for ITRE will be lower than those for the legislatively active committees with uniform externalities (identified in hypothesis 1). Hypothesis 5 leads us to expect higher coefficients for legislative compared with non-legislative committees, reflecting a higher degree of unrepresentativeness on legislative committees. A series of dummy variables was included to control for the effects of national party delegations, with the French Parti Socialiste as the base category.[8]

The results, presented in Table 3, provide some support for hypotheses 1–4 but suggest that the key factor explaining variation in representativeness lies in a simpler distinction between legislative and non-legislative committees. Many of the committees defined in hypothesis 1 are likely to reduce absolute difference scores to a greater degree than are the committees with targeted externalities. The Legal Affairs and Budgetary Control committees, in particular, depress absolute difference scores by, respectively, around 17 and 12 points more than does the Agriculture committee when compared with the base category. The differences between these coefficients are statistically significant at the .05 and .1 levels respectively. The estimates for Foreign Affairs, Fisheries and Women's Rights are all of the expected sign and size but are not statistically significant. The results for RETT and ITRE are in line with hypotheses 3 and 4, but the differences between these coefficients and that of the Agriculture committee do not reach conventional levels of statistical significance. Therefore, although the picture painted by the regression results is similar to that predicted by hypotheses 1–4, few of our predictions hold up when we test for significant differences between coefficients. Thus, with the exception of Legal Affairs and Budgetary Control, we cannot infer that representativeness differs on the basis of the type of externality associated with committees.

As with the MAD scores (Table 2), the Environment committee remains an outlier. With party factors taken into account, this committee fails to demonstrate any substantially or statistically significant difference from Constitutional Affairs. This is unsurprising given the targeted externalities resulting from much of the environmental legislation in the sample, as discussed earlier. Results for the Citizens' Freedoms and Economic committees fail to support hypothesis 1. Both committees reduce the absolute difference in voting behaviour between contingents and parties compared with the non-legislative Constitutional Affairs committee, but not by as much as does the Agriculture committee, which has targeted externalities. In the case of Citizens' Freedoms, this may simply reflect a lower priority accorded by parties to this committee compared with others. For instance, despite having access to the vast bulk of committee chairmanships, neither of the largest two party groups in the EP opted to take up the leadership of Citizens' Freedoms during the period covered by the sample (Corbett et al., 2003: 106). For the Economic committee the result is difficult to explain other than by reference to the restrictions on the committee assignment process described earlier. This outcome may nevertheless require further research into the way the Economic committee is perceived by national delegations.

There is, however, a clear pattern in the results, based on the distinction between legislative and non-legislative committees. With the exception of Environment, Women's Rights and Foreign Affairs, the legislatively active committees all have statistically significant coefficients, suggesting that they depress absolute difference scores when compared with the non-legislative Constitutional Affairs committee. This possibility is tested in model 2, which includes a single dummy variable that scores 1 for legislative committees and 0 for others (that is, Constitutional Affairs and Fisheries). The results, presented in the last two columns of Table 3, show that legislative committees reduce absolute difference scores by nearly 6 points compared with their non-legislative counterparts. Although this model is simpler than the one based on the Cox and McCubbins approach, it still supports the argument that, in areas where the EP has legislative power and therefore the potential to restrict the policy choices of national parties, such parties have an incentive to ensure that their committee contingents are representative.

We are left with a problem identified by Cox and McCubbins (1993): these figures may be a reflection either of the representativeness of committee contingents, or of the degree of logrolling taking place among committee members. Logrolling is associated with 'high-demanding' members of committees who aim to gain benefits specific to their constituents. Bowler and Farrell's (1995) analysis of the interest group links of committee members suggests that the Environment and Agriculture committees are characterized

Table 3 Explaining differences in voting behaviour between committee and party contingents: Tobit regression estimates and *t* scores

	Model 1		*Model 2*	
Independent variable	*Coefficient*	*T score*	*Coefficient*	*T score*
Committees				
All legislative committees	–	–	–5.70***	–2.73
Agriculture	–9.97**	–2.19	–	–
Budgetary Control	–22.06***	–3.92	–	–
Budgets	–14.39***	–4.27	–	–
Citizens' Freedoms and Rights	–6.27*	–1.86	–	–
Economic and Monetary Affairs	–8.00***	–3.34	–	–
Employment and Social Affairs	–16.45***	–4.01	–	–
Environment	–0.20	–0.09	–	–
Fisheries	–8.87	–1.29	–	–
Foreign Affairs	–11.30	–1.46	–	–
Industry, External Trade, Research and Energy	–8.22***	–3.17	–	–
Legal Affairs	–26.67***	–3.66	–	–
Regional Policy, Transport and Tourism	–15.25***	–4.04	–	–
Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities	–18.19	–1.60	–	–
National party delegations				
CDU/CSU	9.93***	3.86	7.53***	3.02
Conservative	3.30	1.26	2.32	0.90
Democratici di Sinistra	3.39	0.62	0.80	0.16
Forza Italia	0.15	0.02	–10.95*	–1.82
Labour	–0.80	–0.29	–1.75	–0.65
Liberal Democrats	–20.84**	–2.52	–22.87***	–2.87

Table 3 Continued

	Model 1		*Model 2*	
Independent variable	*Coefficient*	*T score*	*Coefficient*	*T score*
Partido Popular	1.53	0.57	0.48	0.18
PSOE	–4.95	–1.54	–7.61**	–2.43
RPFIE	16.32	1.24	6.50	0.49
SPD	3.70	1.40	2.85	1.11
Constant	–12.92***	–4.10	–12.29***	–4.03
Log likelihood	–4805.94		–4855.33	
χ^2	168.44***		69.66***	
n = 3343				

Dependent variable: absolute difference score.
The base categories are Constitutional Affairs for the committee dummies in model 1 and the Parti Socialiste for the national delegations in both models.
For abbreviations, see Table 1.
*** $p < .01$; ** $p < .05$; * $p < .1$

by such high demanders. Therefore, for these committees, the MAD scores may reflect a certain degree of logrolling among committee members. Crombez (2000) suggests that stable logrolling may occur in the EU via the member states' choice of Commissioners and their agreement on the Commission's legislative programme. However, EP committees are unlikely to be a key institution in the logrolling process because they lack the gatekeeping power of their US Congressional counterparts. In the US case, the ability to prevent legislation reaching the floor is central to accounts of logrolling and distributional politics (Weingast and Marshall, 1988). In the EP, however, committee–floor relations are nested within a complex game of bargaining between the EP, the European Commission and the Council of Ministers, which varies depending on the legislative procedure in use and in which the power of initiating legislation, at least for pillar one issues, lies legally with the European Commission (Moser, 1996). In sum, although there are reasons to suspect that logrolling is taking place in the EU, the data presented here do not allow us to test this. Nonetheless, most of our findings confirm the view that national party delegations consider the potential legislative involvement of committees when deciding on the make-up of their committee contingents. This is consistent with an explanation of committees as providers of information (Krehbiel, 1991), not only to the legislature but, of more importance in the case of the EP, to their parties back home (Scully, 2000).

Conclusions

This study has demonstrated that committee members in the EP are largely representative of their national party delegations in their behaviour in roll-call votes. This would suggest that national parties are concerned with reducing agency losses by ensuring that all views are given voice in committee decision-making. This allows non-committee members to trust the decisions of their colleagues in areas where they are not directly involved. Variations in mean absolute difference scores are largely, if not entirely, congruent with a modified form of Cox and McCubbins' (1993) partisan selection model. The restrictions on the committee assignment process in the EP, caused by the need to ensure proportional representation of groups and national delegations, mean that it is difficult for national parties, in practice, to replicate the partisan selection model perfectly. Under multivariate analysis, with the mean scores disaggregated, the pattern of coefficients shows much of the variation that we would expect, but most of these differences fail to meet conventional levels of statistical significance. Nevertheless, the

potential for the EP to restrict the policy choices of national parties in areas where it has legislative power evidently influences national delegations' choices. This is demonstrated by the regression results, which show that national delegations maintain higher levels of representativeness on committees that hold legislative powers, compared with others.

These findings support a simple and intuitive view of legislative politics in the EU: as the EP's actions matter more, so national parties are more concerned with what their MEPs do. This argument finds support elsewhere in the academic literature (Carrubba and Gabel, 1998; Scully, 2000). An implication of this is that, if the EP's legislative role is extended through the European Constitution, then national parties' interest in the Parliament will be likely to grow as more of its committees become increasingly legislatively active. Such changes may spill over into the organization of national parties, such that MEPs become more closely involved in policy-making than has previously been the case (Raunio, 2000). As a result, further research will be needed on the links between national parties and MEPs. Indeed, this study has considered only one year in the life of the EP. A more extensive analysis of the importance of legislative powers in explaining variations in committee representativeness would involve looking for changes over time as the EP has gained greater powers. The research presented here might also be furthered by employing other measures of representativeness within parties, such as interest group affiliation and occupational background. Such analysis would add to our understanding of the importance, or otherwise, of political parties in the organization of the European Parliament.

Notes

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1 MEP interview, 21 July 1999. The quotations are taken from a series of semi-structured interviews conducted with MEPs at their offices in Brussels and Strasbourg between 1998 and 2001. The interviews cited here were conducted by David Farrell and Richard Whitaker. See Whitaker (2001) for further details of this sample.

2 MEP interview, 21 July 1999.

3 The details of committee jurisdictions can be found in Annex VI of the European Parliament's *Rules of Procedure* (European Parliament, 2004). See Judge and Earnshaw (2003: 184) or Corbett et al. (2003: 114) for details of the extent of committees' legislative activities.

4 I am grateful to Simon Hix for providing me with these data.

5 It is worth noting that these scores do not measure cohesion within the groups. For example, a party group could be split 50/50 on a particular vote. If that group's committee contingent was split in exactly the same way, then the MAD score would be 0. Similarly, a group voting unanimously would score 0.
6 The full title of the directive is Directive on the Approximation of Laws, Regulations and Administrative Provisions of Member States Concerning the Manufacture, Presentation and Sale of Tobacco Products (COD 1999/0244). See Judge and Earnshaw (2003: 271–6) for a fuller discussion of this directive.
7 The analysis is based on a total of 799 RCVs. In each case an absolute difference score has been calculated for national delegations with at least two members on the relevant committee and where at least half a committee contingent was present. There are 3343 cases in total. The dependent variable has a mean value of 3.57, a standard deviation of 9.35 and minimum and maximum values of 0 and 81.25 respectively.
8 French UDF cases have been excluded from the multivariate analysis because they had a constant value for the dependent variable.

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